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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 002427

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TAGS: PGOV ASEC ECON EAID HA UN  
SUBJECT: PREVAL: MINUSTAH MUST ACT NOW

REF: PAP 2425

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. I met with President Preval on the evening of December 21 to discuss the current security environment, the political machinations underway in Parliament and the Primature, and Haiti's continuing dispute with China. Preval also shared with me frank details of his health (reported reftel). Saying that he was getting tired of being blamed for dragging his feet on security, President Preval stressed that it is now up to MINUSTAH to take some decisive action to deal with the gangs. However, he is concerned that differences between UNSRSG and MINUSTAH Commander Elito will stall any MINUSTAH action. MINUNSTAH, Preval said, has agreed to launch into Citi Soleil before Christmas but he is skeptical. Preval attributed problems between the PM and parliament to inexperience and lack of support, noting that the PM often speaks before he thinks. He added that building Haitian political institutions will be key to the country's development. Preval continued to express surprise at the strains in Haiti's relationship with China and did not reply when I noted that Beijing expects an apology. The President again expressed his thanks for HOPE, although he is worried that Haiti does not have the expertise to take full advantage of the law at this point. The President ducked my request that he intercede to allow the extradition of Haitians charged in the US. Throughout the meeting, Preval was relaxed and open, more engaged than I have seen him in some time. End Summary.

Security

¶2. (C) Saying that he was getting tired of being blamed for dragging his feet on security, President Preval stressed that it is now up to MINUSTAH to take some decisive action to deal with the gangs. He has, he said, been pushing the UN SRSG for more than two months to finally act. He gave them a green light "months ago." He stopped talking to the gangs when it became clear that it would bring nothing. He pulled the plug on DDR. But, Preval said in frustration. MINUSTAH "always has an excuse...first it's the elections, then it's deployments, then they must build toilets or some such thing." The recent wave of kidnappings, the targeting of Haitian children, is making people afraid, Preval said. Haiti simply does not have the wherewithal to deal with the situation on its own - security is why MINUSTAH is here. MINUSTAH, Preval firmly stated, "must act now to stop this."

¶3. (C) Preval believes that UNSRSG Mulet is committed to move MINUSTAH into action against the gangs in Cite Soleil

and Martissant, but that the SRSG has been repeatedly and consistently blocked by MINUSTAH Commander Gen. Elito. Mulet tells him that they are ready and just waiting for the go-ahead. He has given it, Preval assured me. He, as President of Haiti, wants to end this security problem, once and for all. But, he noted, he is not getting the support he needs from MINUSTAH. He noted that Mulet tells him that there will be concrete action before Christmas, but he - Preval - is skeptical. In the meantime, the president said, the situation gets worse.

#### Fate of Prime Minister Alexis

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¶4. (C) I remarked that PM Alexis is coming under increasing pressure in the Parliament and on the street for the perceived inaction of the government. This does not bode well for the new year. I added that the PM's tendency to chastise and confront the international community does him - and Haiti - no good either. Preval agreed and said he believes that Alexis will settle down. Preval himself has attempted to reach out again to Parliament and the political parties - he started with Fusion and Alyans - in an effort to calm the waters. He does believe, however, that this is no longer his job: Alexis should be doing more of it, as he is head of government. But the president agreed vigorously that Haiti does not need a political crisis at this point in its fragile democratic evolution. As for some of the statements Alexis has made recently, Preval remarked, "they are too bad." Alexis is inexperienced, Preval noted, and not a professional politician. The PM makes mistakes and often talks before he thinks, particularly when he is under pressure. Preval

PORT AU PR 00002427 002 OF 003

believes that the PM will weather the political storms, but he did not rule out an attempt to bring a vote of non-confidence against the PM to the floor of the parliament in the new year.

#### Parliament and the Government

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¶5. (C) Most of the current political tensions between the government and the parliament, Preval contends, stems from the lack of experience on both sides. Alexis's Cabinet lacks experience, he noted, with the exception of Minister of Finance Dorsainville, Minister of Public Works Verella and Minister of Planning Bellrive, none of the other ministers have ever served in government. They are not used to using the government bureaucracy. They are often inept. (Note. In that regard, Preval made special note of the highly politicized Minister of Public Education, Bien Aime, who is generally regarded as being a disaster. End note.) Parliament is equally inexperienced and ill-organized. Party discipline is nonexistent. Even the President's own party, L'Espwa, lacks discipline and Preval does not believe it is his duty to instill that discipline into it. Both sides need training and organizational support. I reminded him that the previous day I had opened a training seminar for parliamentarians, which is part of USAID's dols 7 million of support for the Parliament. Preval welcomed this, arguing that institutional development is one of his primary preoccupations in the new year.

#### China, Taiwan and the MINUSTAH mandate

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¶6. (C) I raised the current state of Haiti's relations with China, saying that my recent contacts with Beijing's representative here had reinforced the impression that China is unhappy with Haiti and will await an apology for its actions in the UN before moving ahead on a MINUSTAH mandate renewal. Preval was defensive, first claiming that his

PermRep in New York acted without instruction, then saying that he has talked to Mr. Zhang in an effort to smooth over feelings. Haiti meant no disrespect. Indeed, Haiti looked forward to the day when it would have better relations with Beijing in every area. There is really no reason, Preval said, to overreact to this misunderstanding and he suggested that Washington could help smooth things over. China, I said, expects a clear gesture on your part to end this "misunderstanding." It has asked for an apology. You have made no response whatsoever to date. Whether at the end of the day it requires an apology, an explanation or a clarification, Haiti must take some concrete steps to begin to address this issue. MINUSTAH's presence in Haiti is too important to let this linger. Preval did not reply.

#### HOPE legislation

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¶7. (SBU) Observing that Ambassador Joseph in Washington was "ecstatic" at being invited to the December 20 White House signing ceremony for the Omnibus Trade Bill, which included the HOPE legislation, Preval opined that "HOPE could change the face of Haiti." It was now up to the Haitians to use HOPE to its best advantage. He was concerned, however, that Haiti's small textile industry would somehow fail to do so and sought USG assistance in assuring that the country did whatever necessary to meet the intent of the legislation, particularly with regard to customs and content issues. I replied that we have begun consultations with the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and leading textile firms and will be able to provide some expertise to walk the industry through US regulations. Preval was pleased.

#### Extradition of Haitian Criminals Wanted in US

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¶8. (C) I told Preval that members of the Embassy had met again that morning with Minister of Justice Magloire to discuss three US outstanding warrants for Haitian citizens charged with various crimes, including kidnapping a US citizen child, money laundering, and drug trafficking. We had tried to find a way to get the GOH to extradite or otherwise remove these individuals to the US for trial. Given the state of Haitian judiciary, a problem that Preval had

PORT AU PR 00002427 003 OF 003

himself often bemoaned, we thought that this would take three bad guys off their hands. Thus far, the Minister has refused to send the individuals to us, citing the Haitian constitution which prohibits extradition of Haitian citizens.

Has the Minister studied the files of these three, the president asked. When I answered in the affirmative, Preval shook his head and said nothing. When pressed, he said he would look into the cases, but clearly showed no enthusiasm for doing so.

#### Travel Plans

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¶9. (SBU) Preval confirmed that he would travel to Cuba for medical tests and treatment on December 26-29 (see reftel on Preval's health). He also plans to go to Jamaica on January 3, meet up with the Canadian Governor General and take Haitian/American singer Wyclef Jean with him to drum up business for Haiti. Preval pushed for a meeting with President Bush sometime early in the new year and said that he was prepared to come to DC at the President's convenience. He reminded me that he has yet to call on the President in his official capacity and stressed it was important to do so early in the new year.

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¶10. (SBU) Preval was fully engaged and in a good mood. He appeared relaxed, albeit somewhat tired, joking about the string of Ambassadors coming to see him the day before they left on holiday leave. As always, there was almost no one around in the palace and we spent the time uninterrupted. Preval told me that he is "working" for the holidays, but hopes to spend some time with his daughter during the season.

She is a singer and currently living with him at the palace.

(She is one of two girls born to Preval and his first wife Solange.) During our visit, Preval called confidant Bob Manuel, currently visiting El Salvador with his family to wish him merry Christmas. Manuel told me he will return to Haiti during the second week of January.

SANDERSON